

ERRONEOUS *Opinions concerning PROVIDENCE refuted,—*
the TRUE NOTION slated,—and illustrated by the EVENTS
which have lately happened to this Nation:

IN A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED IN THE
PARISH CHURCH of GREAT YARMOUTH,
On FRIDAY FEBRUARY the 8th, 1782,
Being the Day appointed for
A G E N E R A L F A S T;
AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.
(To which, are added N O T E S.)

By S A M U E L C O O P E R, D. D.
MINISTER OF THAT PARISH.

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M.DCC.LXXXII.



TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL,
JOHN REYNOLDS, Esq.
MAYOR of GREAT YARMOUTH.

S I R,

IN consequence of your very polite and obliging letter, requesting the publication of the following discourse; (as the wish not only of yourself, but likewise of several of your brethren of the corporation, and of several other inhabitants,) it now makes its appearance in public. I must however confess, that from my compliance with your inclinations, I cannot lay any claim to merit; as, the request itself, afforded me the greatest pleasure. A pleasure, which, believe me, Sir, had not its source in vanity; but, which flowed from the reflection, that such a request was the most incontestable proof, that my performance of some part of my duty at least, was acceptable to those,—whom it ought to be my wish to please,—that it may be in my power to instruct.

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The wish for such talents as may increase our ability of doing good, and for that fame which may render that good more extensive, are desires, which even a good man may indulge, and are directed to the only objects, for which indeed a wise man would labour. Other pursuits, may gratify pride; these alone, can impart comfort. If they even attain not their end, the very aim is virtue, and confers that self-satisfaction, of which neither malice can prevent the acquisition, nor envy take away the possession. It secures to us likewise, that love and approbation of those who best know us, and that respect and esteem of others from their report, which is the unexacted, though never failing homage, every man pays to genuine virtue, and unaffected piety: which can neither be obtained by all the stratagems of cunning, nor destroyed by all the virulence of party. Whatever be my portion of fame,—may that approbation, and that love be mine!—May that esteem and respect, which, the inhabitants of Great Yarmouth have hitherto so gratuitously bestowed upon me, from the benevolence of their own minds, never be deservedly withdrawn, by any defect in mine; but, may a lasting intimacy hereafter improve, what an early intercourse has at present begun! May that approbation which has accompanied the first exercises of my duty, be meliorated into a love, which will embalm my memory, when all my labours shall be terminated in the grave.

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To aim at what is right with sincerity, and to plan good without hypocrisy, are often, amidst the frailties of our present state, the projects of those, who neither perform the one, nor execute the other. Had it not been my *wish*, to perform properly the duties of my profession, I certainly would not have given up, what is generally deemed to be a sinecure, for so awful a charge, as I have now undertaken,—the care of so very large and populous a parish. May the fervor, with which, that intention was formed, be equalled by the zeal, with which, it should be carried into execution!

Gratitude forbids me to conclude this address, without seizing this opportunity of publicly acknowledging, and sincerely thanking, you Sir,—the *Deputy Mayor**;—and every other member of the corporation, for the favours, which, it being in the power of the corporation alone to confer upon the minister of the parish, they have so very liberally bestowed upon me. To you, Sir, give me leave to add likewise, my more particular thanks, for the additional value stamped upon those favours, by the very polite and obliging manner, in which, the information of them, has been always communicated by you. If any can, such favours certainly are, a still farther call upon me for an attention to my duty,

* *William Fisher*, Esq. who served the office of Mayor last year, a second time, with the universal approbation of his townsmen.

duty, and an additional motive for the performance of it; as, that attention and that performance, are likewise, the best recompence, which it is in my power to make for such obligations. May the discharge of my office be such, as shall most conduce to the mutual comfort and satisfaction of both pastor and flock here, and to their eternal felicity hereafter! This is the heartfelt wish, and fervent prayer of their most affectionate minister.

Believe me to be, Sir, with great esteem and regard,

Your most obliged,

And most faithful

Humble Servant,

SAMUEL COOPER.

J O B, Chapter xii. Verse xxiii.

HE INCREASETH THE NATIONS, AND DESTROYETH
THEM; HE ENLARGETH THE NATIONS, AND
STRAITENETH THEM AGAIN.

WHOEVER acknowledges a first cause, or a God, who created the world, must, would he be consistent with himself, necessarily admit with the author of the book of Job, his providence in the administration of it. For can any one maintain, that the same almighty Fiat which first spake the world into existence, cannot as readily annihilate it; or that the same power which made, cannot as easily destroy? As nothing therefore, could at first rise into being without the will of God, or of a creator, nothing can continue in it, or cease to be, without his permission or providence.

There are some indeed, who when pressed with difficulties, which the imbecility of their minds are unable to encounter, would willingly shelter themselves under a distinction, between the WILL of God, and his PERMISSION. But as it is evident to the thoughtful enquirer, that God can permit nothing, but what his wisdom fore-
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saw, and his power could have prevented; nothing can happen on earth, which makes not a part of the counsels of heaven. We may therefore be assured, that whatever God permits, will *ultimately*, by some means contribute to the greatest good the whole system of created natures was capable of receiving. Morally evil therefore as some actions are in the immediate agents, yet when they are traced up to their first causes, and followed down to their latest effects, whatever conviction they may afford us of the weakness, ignorance, and wickedness of man, they will finally evince the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. They will all be found, to be only links in one infinite chain, which is fastened to the throne of God, and which is upheld by the hand of his providence. A chain, which connects together, in such a manner, the several associations of mankind in various nations, and even each separate and distinct individual, as to maintain the common happiness of one vast extensive whole; and at the same time, to secure the greatest possible good of every the least and minutest part.

Fully to trace this doctrine through all its branches, to dissipate all the clouds of prejudice raised about it by scoffers, to clear away every filament of sophistry woven around it by infidels, would indeed require a treatise, rather than a sermon. It would lead to a discussion not only too prolix for the present opportunity, but also too remote from the present occasion. But, as such a disquisition, is at this time impossible, so likewise

I flatter myself, that it is in this place unnecessary. I trust, that your christian humility will at all times repel the arrogance of profane mockery*, and your christian piety secure you from the snares of a subtle scepticism*.

There is however, one part of this subject, which may be treated perhaps without too much intrusion on your time, and certainly with very much pertinence to the occasion. I mean an Examination, and Refutation of some Mistakes concerning the Doctrine of a Providence, which are entertained by some believers themselves. By men who are therefore entitled to our respect for their piety, though they cannot win our assent to their opinions.

The first error I shall mention, is one, which seems to be very generally adopted, and is the supposition, that the notion of a providence must necessarily imply the supernatural or miraculous agency of God, separate and distinct from his usual, and ordinary administration. By the *latter*, they seem to think, that he only takes care of the *general* welfare; and it is by the former alone, they imagine, that he can provide for the security and happiness of *each individual*. Hence it is common, to hear of a distinction between the ORDINARY and EXTRAORDINARY PROVIDENCE of God, and between his GENERAL and PARTICULAR Providence.

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* * *Voltaire* and *Hume* are here more particularly alluded to.

Most true it is indeed, that there have been some occasions, upon which God has departed from his usual mode of administration, and, by mighty signs and wonders, contrary to the usual train and course of events, convinced the most hardened heart, "*that he ruled over all*". To the Hebrew nation, for instance, almost all his dispensations were of this kind. But by what other means less extraordinary and unusual, could *they* have been convinced of God's existence, power, protection, and providence, when they had forgotten the former revelations he had made of himself; and from the things seen in the creation of the world, and in the ordinary and usual series of causes and effects, *they understood not his eternal power and godhead?* So likewise, when God in his good time vouchsafed to *bring life and immortality to light*, which man had before in vain looked for in the cloudy horizon of human science; he again thought proper to work mighty signs and wonders, plainly because, the authority of the teacher, could alone impart a conviction of the truth of the doctrine. These were great and uncommon occasions, and evidently required therefore extraordinary and miraculous interpositions. But have we reason to expect the same mode of divine administration, where there is not the same necessity in human affairs?

It must indeed be acknowledged, that even in the common occurrences of human life, there are some events befall us, which are seemingly so unconnected with any prior causes,—so surprising;—if not altogether singular,—so wonderful:

wonderful ;—if not absolutely miraculous,—that it is sometimes difficult to discern the marks of discrimination, and they are allowed by almost every one, to be such striking demonstrations of the operations of a divine providence, that for the moment at least, they rouse the most careless, and appall the most abandoned.

To enumerate instances either in respect to nations, or individuals, would be an endless task. The day would close in darkness, before any one versed in the history of mankind, could relate an hundredth part of what his memory would supply. Who even of us, could glance back an eye on the events of his own life, and not recollect various instances of the utmost importance to his happiness, which neither his own power, nor wisdom, nor the power nor wisdom of those most interested in his welfare could have commanded, nor even have contrived ; but which befell him, not only beyond all his hopes, but even contrary to all his expectations. All such events, the pious but hasty zealot *instantly pronounces*, to be marks of a *miraculous interposition*. But, by seeming to confine the divine agency to these particular events, he occasions in some, a disbelief of its operation in the more general course of human affairs. Whilst others, discovering that regular, though latent series of causes and effects, by which some singular acquisition or deliverance was brought about, and at the same time, forgetting the omniscient mind which planned, and the almighty hand which conducted it, run into the contrary

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extreme, and they deny altogether the agency of God's *particular* providence, and *every miraculous* interposition. Much is it to be lamented, when zeal in a good cause is without knowledge:—When the credulity of some does but generate infidelity in others,—and when an excessive blaze of devotion kindles only the flame of impiety.

The mistake of believers, seems in this case, to be grounded upon two opinions, though almost opposite; yet, both equally false. The one,—that infinite power is able to work contradictions. The other,—that some things which do not imply a contradiction, are yet difficult, or impossible to infinite power. For, to suppose such events, as have been just alluded to,—to be miraculous,—is, to suppose a course of nature to exist. But at the same time to maintain, that so many events occur,—which are not parts of a course of nature,—is to annihilate it. Again, though some things are called easy, and some difficult, in relation to different degrees of finite power; yet it is absurd to suppose those terms applicable to infinite power; to which, all things must be equally possible. Infinite Power is therefore without doubt, as equal to the task of adjusting every event to the designs of infinite goodness, by his arrangements at FIRST; as, by his interposition AFTERWARDS. The same wisdom which foreknows, and the same power which produces all things, could evidently, as well adjust every event to every man's foreseen future disposition,

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as to his known present one. The same reward, may as well be provided in a regular course of things, for that piety and devotion which is yet to come; and the same punishment, for that impiety and blasphemy, which is not yet uttered; as if, the one, had now called forth the admiration of the world; and the other had excited its abhorrence. To vindicate then the doctrine of a providence, which regulates the affairs of every nation, and every individual, there is no necessity to call in, or to suppose, the assistance of prodigies and miracles. Every circumstance, may have its appointed place in a REGULAR COURSE OF THINGS, which is required to raise the individual to happiness, or depress him in misery; which is necessary to “*increase nations, and to destroy them, to enlarge them, and to straiten them again*”. Should the well known questions be asked us, whether according to this notion of a providence, Ætna will forget her thunders or recall her fires, should a sage request it? Will the gravitation of some old temple nodding to its fall cease, if one man go by, and reserve its hanging wall for another*? We may answer without presumption,—

* Shall burning Ætna, if a sage requires,
 Forget to thunder, and recall her fires?
 On air or sea new motions be imprest,
 Oh blameless Bethel! to relieve thy breast?
 When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
 Shall gravitation cease if you go by?
 Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
 For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?

Essay on Man.

sumption,—that God may have so concatenated events,—that without any infringement upon the will, or even any influence whatever upon the mind, the sage who thus requests, shall on account of some other present occupation, not wish to explore the mountain, whilst it pours forth its fires; and that one particular man, from some exercise of benevolence,—some engagement of business,—or some pursuit of pleasure,—shall not go by,—and that from some one or other of these motives,—another shall,—go by at that moment—when—the wall shall cease to be supported, by the laws of gravitation. So likewise, though we grant, that God will not impress *new* motions on air or sea; yet, he may have so proportioned the effects of every wind that blows, and every wave that rolls, to the resources,—time,—place,—materials,—builders, and other circumstances respecting different ships,—that one ship, may be saved from that storm, which at the same moment wrecks another.

Let us not therefore imagine, that *God's ways* are like *man's ways*; and because, human legislatures can by GENERAL LAWS, provide only for the GENERAL HAPPINESS, that God's plans, want amendment or interposition, for the benefit of INDIVIDUALS. But, convinced, that every blessing which we enjoy, and every misfortune which we deplore, whether as insulated individuals, or as members of a state,—must befall us by the will of God; let us neither be rash to determine, nor *anxious to enquire*,—whether they be brought about by his ordinary,
or

or extraordinary agency.—Thus shall we safely steer between the pertinacity of bigots, and the scepticism of infidels. For whichever be the cause,—the same gratitude and love,—the same trust and dependence are equally due;—the same hope of his favour, and the same dread of his displeasure will equally arise;—the same reward will as surely await virtue,—and the same punishment will as certainly attend vice. *

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* Those, who are conversant with disquisitions upon this subject, will immediately perceive, that there is a resemblance between the account here stated of the operations of providence, and that given by the amiable, excellent, and rational Wollaston, in his *Religion of Nature delineated*. The Author for his part readily acknowledges, that he has no doubt, but that Mr. Wollaston's sentiments led him to his own. But it appears very wonderful, that at the very time, Mr. Wollaston was attempting to account for the operations of providence without any infringement upon free will, (as it is commonly called) or rather, (as it ought to be called) the power of chusing, that his own scheme, which was meant to obviate such an objection, was liable to the same;—which indeed, he himself seems to have perceived. And, what is more wonderful still,—that, when he intended by his scheme to account for the operations of providence without the intervention of miracles, that his own plan itself, presupposes them;—which with all his sagacity he did not seem to discern. But, these positions will be evident, upon a concise view of the PROPOSITION he MEANS to prove, and the METHOD he TAKES to prove it.

“ May we expect MIRACLES, (say he) or can there be a particular providence, a providence that suits the SEVERAL CASES and prayers of individuals, without a continual REPETITION and force FREQUENTLY committed upon the LAWS OF NATURE, and the FREEDOM of INTELLIGENT

Another error, which seems very generally to mislead believers in their notions of a providence, is the supposition,

"TELLIGENT Agents? For my part, (continues he) I think there may."
 —This therefore, is the PROPOSITION he immediately proceeds to prove. As a MEAN to this, he *first* evinces the prescience of God. *Secondly*. He shows, "that it is not IMPOSSIBLE that such laws of nature, and such a series of causes and effects may be ORIGINALLY designed, that not only general provisions may be made for the several species of beings, but even PARTICULAR cases, at least MANY OF THEM may also be provided for without INNOVATIONS or ALTERATIONS in the course of nature." *Thirdly*. He proves, "that it is not IMPOSSIBLE, that men, whose natures and actions are foreknown, may be introduced into the world in such TIMES, PLACES, and other CIRCUMSTANCES, as that their acts and behaviour may not only coincide with the GENERAL plan of things, but also answer MANY PRIVATE cases too." *Fourthly*. He shows, "that it is not IMPOSSIBLE, that MANY things *suited* to SEVERAL cases, may be brought to pass by means of SECRET, and sometimes SUDDEN INFLUENCES on our MINDS, or the minds of other men, whose acts may affect us." Such is the sum of the proofs, which Mr. Wollaston has given of the foregoing proposition. But that he himself was conscious, that it was liable to the very objection relative to the will, he meant it should obviate, (as I have observed above,) is evident, from his own concession. For says he, "if any one should object, that if men are thus overruled in their actions, then they are deprived of their liberty, &c." The answer is, "that though man is a free agent, he may not be free as to EVERY THING. His freedom may be RESTRAINED, and he only accountable for those acts in respect of which he IS FREE." And that he was *not* conscious, (as I observed above,) that his scheme involved in it an interposition of miracles, as much as any other, is manifest from his own assertion. For says he, "If this then be the case, as it seems to be, that men's minds are susceptible of such INSINUATIONS and IMPRESSIONS,

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fition, that NATIONAL PROSPERITY, is always the reward of NATIONAL VIRTUE. An opinion, which flows from that very fruitful source of error; into which, every one

“as frequently by ways unknown do affect them, and give them an inclination towards this or that, how many things may be brought to pass by these means without FIXING OR REFINING the laws of nature: any more than they are unfixed, when one man alters the opinion of another by throwing a book proper for the purpose in his way?”

But surely, ideas succeed each other in the mind, by as regular laws (though more latent) as bodies appear and disappear in the universe: and the operations of mind upon those ideas are as much regulated (though it is less easily discovered) as the motions of bodies on each other. For otherwise, how could there be such a SCIENCE as MIND, or such an ART as LOGIC. Any new impressions, or influences therefore, which are not according to those laws, are as much MIRACLES, as the suspension of the usual laws of motion, or an impression of new forces upon bodies. But certainly, to give security and happiness, or their contraries, to nations or individuals, by disposing and adjusting of EVENTS ALONE in such a manner, that the *one* shall be procured, and the *other* avoided in a regular series of usual causes and effects; and, as I have supposed, without any controul likewise on the exercise of men's powers or any miraculous influences on their minds,—is as possible for infinite power to effect,—as the opposite supposition, which is Mr. Wollaston's hypothesis. My explication of the operations of providence, can alone solve the wise man's seeming paradox, but real and most comfortable truth; that *though* a MAN'S HEART, DEVISETH his WAY, yet, it is the LORD, who DIRECTETH his STEPS.

Long as this note already is, I cannot however conclude it, without noticing a very remarkable circumstance; that Mr. Wollaston in a treatise on *natural religion*, and whose silence in respect to *revealed*, has been often construed into disbelief,—has, without intending it, afforded a most RA-

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one *must* fall, who quits EXPERIENCE, the only sure guide to fact; and flies to ARGUMENT, which is not fitted to discover it. Experience forces them indeed to admit, that prosperity is by no means the constant reward, nor sure proof, of the virtue of INDIVIDUALS. But they maintain, it must be so, in respect to NATIONS;—because,—though this dispensation of things may be rectified to the individual in a future state, yet to a nation, there can be no such future reparation; and therefore, such an order of things, would be irreconcilable with the goodness of God. But let these men, who are thus involved in a labyrinth of words, which they use not as *signs* but as *substitutes* for ideas, tell us,—how the prosperity of a NATIONAL BODY, can be separated from the prosperity, of its MEMBERS? Does the word, *nation*, denote any thing but a *collection* of *individuals* united under the same government, or ruled by the same laws? Can then the nation be prosperous, and the individuals who compose the nation, not be so? And if a future state can recompence to every virtuous individual, the misfortunes in which he is immersed, from other sources, can it not as easily compensate those in which he is overwhelmed in common with all the other members of a community? And if
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TIONAL account of that supernatural agency of the divine spirit upon the human mind, for religious purposes,—which is called,—DIVINE GRACE; but which is disbelieved by some christians, because it appears to them IRRATIONAL.

a recompence be given to EACH INDIVIDUAL, will not then, reparation be made to the WHOLE NATION?†

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† There are many readers, who, upon the first perusal of the question,—"whether a nation can be prosperous, when the individuals who compose it, are not?"—will, I dare to say, with much positiveness declare, that it must without doubt, be answered in the *affirmative*. If however, they will but give themselves the trouble of thinking, they will, after an accurate investigation of the question, discover, that their dogmatism and their error, arose, from a confusion of ideas, or abuse of words. A source of error,—which even the greater part of the most celebrated writers in LOGIC and METAPHYSICS, whose, more peculiar province it is, to protect others from falling into it, have more augmented by their own practice, than diminished by their cautions. The science of POLITICKS likewise, seems to be a region, in which this source of error very much abounds. Nay indeed, the very word, POLICY, which *ought* to denote, either the *sagacity* which secures a nation from external interruption, and the *wisdom* which provides for the internal peace and happiness of a state, or at least, the *regulations*, which that sagacity and that wisdom adopt for those ends,—now scarcely ever denotes with any party, any thing more, than—craft and its intrigues, or cunning and its equivocations. So likewise, when the PROSPERITY of the nation is mentioned, instead of that word being used to signify as it ought, if it relate to *external policy*, the nation's means of security against the pride, envy, ambition, and injustice of surrounding nations; it will be found only to imply at best, a mere extent of territory, or even perhaps, nothing more than some brilliant victories, which do not so much as conduce even to the acquisition of territory; but which only serve to erect bloody trophies, to the glory of a prince, by which, the people are impoverished, and the country is depopulated. If the word, "PROSPERITY," refer to *internal policy*, it is not then applied as it ought, to denote the wealth, power or fame, of the majority of *every* rank, order, or class in the state; but by the prosperity of the nation is meant only, the interest of some *one* rank, or class of the people, in *opposition* to that of the *rest*; or, the acquisition of some trivial temporary

The darkness however, in which the cloud of words involves these pious, though mistaken men, is not bounded here.

temporary advantage to the *rest*, obtained, by violating the rights of some *one* order, and totally destroying its private happiness, and its public use.

Whoever, will keep in his mind, the true definitions of the words just mentioned, when he takes up any of the numerous political pamphlets, (as they are called) which are continually swarming from the press, he will be astonished at the sophisms, by which the writers are either deceived themselves, or by which they mean to deceive others. He will find, schemes proposed by merchants, which for the sake of some partial and temporary advantage, would, if adopted, be the ruin of trade, and of the country. He will perceive, others suggested by landholders, which for some advantage of similar extent and duration, would, in the end, render the produce of land of no value, and occasion destruction to towns and cities. Plans, he will discover, proposed by every class in the state, which are only calculated to procure some immediate benefit to their *own order*, by doing an injury and injustice to the *rest*; but all which pretend, notwithstanding, to aim at the PUBLIC GOOD.

There is, ONE CLASS of people indeed, and much more numerous than the *rest*, who must be excepted, out of the general observation just made, of publishing schemes, to improve their own condition, at the expence of others.—I mean,—the POOR. For, I do not recollect any attempt, to prove ROBBERY to be a PUBLIC BENEFIT, since the days of *Mandeville*. And, amidst the other various abuse of words, *robbery* now generally denotes a crime, which can only be committed by the LOWER classes of mankind, against the HIGHER. For the same injustice, when perpetrated by the *higher* classes, and suffered by the *lower*, is sanctified by the doer, converted into a *public benefit*, and boasted of perhaps, as a proof, of the PROSPERITY of the NATION.

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here. They confound PROSPERITY and HAPPINESS with each other; though they are totally separate and distinct.
Prosperity,

It is impossible for, BENEVOLENCE, or even, HUMANITY, to take a view of the present state of the *lowest class*, especially in the country, and compare it with its past, "*without agonizing at every pore.*" When, any one consider, the number of resources from want, they once enjoyed, which they have now lost; and the many alleviations from distress of which they once partook, but which are now withdrawn; (to both of which circumstances a variety of causes have conduced) not only his charity, but even his love for the constitution will be deeply wounded, when he perceive, that the LEGISLATURE itself, too frequently diminishes the POOR MAN's few remaining resources, and aggravates his multiplied miseries. *Their rights*, who have neither ability to be their own advocates, nor money to procure them, ought surely, to be particularly guarded by the legislature; instead of being left, as they now are, to accident for the discovery, or to private humanity for relief. It is to be feared, that even every PEER, will not follow the example of one in this county, who stops an application to the legislature, which would certainly be attended with great private emolument to himself, till he can see a probability of adjusting every right, and giving the POOR MAN a FULL EQUIVALENT, for what he now enjoys. Where this is not done, it is some comfort indeed to the poor man to know, that, if his cry can reach the ear, either of the faithful member of the largest county in this kingdom, or the upright president of the first court of judicature,—though, PRIEST and LEVITE pass by on the other side, *they* at least, have not yet to learn,—"*who, is their neighbour.*"

But, if a majority of the legislature determine, that the PUBLIC GOOD consists in taking away benefits which have been long enjoyed by the poor, WITHOUT ALLOWING THEM an EQUIVALENT, and in CONFERRING THEIR FORMER SHARE, upon the HIGHER ORDERS, by bestowing upon THEM as an EQUIVALENT, *ten times the value*, of what *they* give up;—
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Prosperity, is indeed the source of various pleasures; and by happiness, we mean only, an uninterrupted possession of pleasure. But the joys which prosperity imparts, are only those which WEALTH, POWER, and FAME can bestow; which, *never* at any time, constitute, more than a very *small* part; and do not *necessarily* form *any* part of that accumulation of pleasures, the SUM of which, we call HAPPINESS. But that sum, I may venture to affirm, is uniformly and invariably the portion of VIRTUE. It is individually the portion of every member, and nationally the portion of the whole aggregate body. Whereas, on the contrary, though prosperity is frequently administered by the kind hand of providence, as a cordial to support virtue in her struggles with the *follics*, *vices*, and *calamities* of the world, yet it is likewise frequently dropped into the cup of vice,—in which, it ferments into a poison;—which either lethargifies the senses in stupidity, or exhilarates them into madness.

Having thus endeavoured to vindicate the Doctrine of a Providence from the mistakes of some believers, who without doubt mean well, though they certainly think ill; let us now take a summary view of God's late dealings with this nation. By which, I trust, we shall find, that
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then indeed the doctrine of this note will be overturned from its foundation; and the expressions, "PROSPERITY OF THE NATION," and the "OPPRESSION OF THE POOR," must ever after be taken, and used, as SYNONYMOUS TERMS.

what has been suggested and advanced as a general theory, is confirmed, and illustrated, by particular facts.

The greater part of you, my brethren, were, I apprehend, witnesses, and none, I conclude, who saw, can have forgotten, the fear, terror, and dismay which took possession of our hearts, and the despair which was visible in every countenance at the commencement of the last war. Scarce a wind blew, which did not bring us news of a defeat;—some unsuccessful attempt of ours,—or some conquest gained by our enemies.—Our navy retreated,—our places were taken from us,—our armies were routed.—The countries of our allies were entered, pillaged, plundered, and ravaged; their harvests were torn up,—and their cultivated fields converted into a desert*. Their cities were laid waste,—their towns were consumed with fire,—their inhabitants were slain,—scarce a child hanging at the breast could escape;—deaf were the barbarians to the cries of infancy and the shrieks of maternal affection,—the sword pierced through the child to the breast of the mother.—These miseries we were forced to behold, without possessing power to alleviate.—Our army compleat, and in full vigour, lay down their arms at the feet of the invaders, and with bend-

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* See Belleisle's Instructions, and the cruelties exercised by the Kalmucks and Cossacs in the territories of the King of Prussia.

ed necks crouched to receive the yoke of the conquerors†. We were held in scorn and derision of our enemies, and became a bye word amongst all nations. Our trade was destroyed,—our credit was sunk,—our martial spirit was fled,—our arms lay neglected,—our hands hung nerveless;—horror and despair were in our streets.—We called around for succour, but there was none to help us,—except,—O shame to BILONS,—a few mercenary troops who were hired to guard our very coasts‡. An invasion was threatened,—and every day expected, and at the dawn of every morning, it was doubted, whether before the sun again reached the west, we might not hold our laws, liberties, and religion, at the mercy only of a Gallic despot, and of a popish bigot.

In this hopeless and despairing state, what help could we expect from MAN, or what, some will say, could save us, *less* than a *miracle*, from GOD? But the Lord by means,—though *extraordinary*,—yet *not contrary* to the course of nature,—though *wonderful*,—yet *not miraculous*,—was so far from suffering us utterly to perish, that he again gave us wisdom in counsel, and strength in the day of battle;—he taught our hands to war, and our arms to break even a bow of steel.—Our hopes revived,—our breasts once more glowed with martial fire,
—our

† The convention of Closter Severn.

‡ The Hessians and Hannoverians.

—our armies were led forth to conquest,—and we subdued our enemies under us.—Our credit rose.—Our trade revived.—The seas were covered with our ships.—Each quarter of the globe re-echoed to the thunder of the British navy, and trembled under the stroke of the British arm.—Our enemies were in their turn dismayed; fear came upon them, and an horrible dread overwhelmed them.—Their armies fled before us, their fortresses surrendered at our command, or were abandoned at our approach.—Their own country was several times invaded,—we scarcely marched any where, but victory led our van, and rout and slaughter followed in the rear.—In the west our navies rode triumphant; in the east we deposed kings and set them up; commerce poured her richest treasures into our lap;—each region of the earth submitted to our dominion; people of every nation were proud to become our subjects: We might even say, that, *we had the heathen given us for our inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for our possession.*

Though the haughty Spaniard, had hand joined in hand with the perfidious Gaul, when the latter seemed to be suing only for peace,—we rejected the insidious offer,—we prepared to oppose the union without dismay,—we triumphed over both;—and the number and strength of our enemies, only increased the lustre of our victories. Contrary to the laws of nations,—contrary to the faith of treaties,—the Spaniard entered the territories
of

of his and our faithful ally*,—ravaged and lay waste his country,—and in the pride of his heart and first flush of success, where there was no one to resist, boasted, that he would drag the sovereign from his throne,—expel him from his own dominions, and with the iron rod of conquest and oppression, make his kingdom, a province, to the dominions of Spain. God, was however pleased, to make us the instruments of his protection to the unresisting weakness of our allies, and of his punishment to the haughty views of our enemies. Whilst, they were meditating nothing, but glory and conquest, they met with nothing, but defeat and disgrace. Their ships laden with the treasures of the Indies were captured, and even their strongest hold, which contained the key to all their treasures,—though defended by valour, fortified by nature, and deemed impregnable by art, could not withstand the force of British courage and conduct. They were unable to assist their allies, or even to defend themselves. But being become the ridicule of enemies, and the jest even of their friends, they were glad to hide their weakness in obscurity, and shelter themselves from further infamy under the downy wings of Peace.—Peace was granted them, a peace, which whether opposed only by self-interest, or really inadequate to our vast success,—was however such an one,—as promised security to our conquests,—stability to our commerce,—and permanency to our glory.

Under

* The dominions of the king of Portugal.

Under such circumstances, well might we think ourselves highly favoured by God,—and that providence had great designs in view for us.—That he intended to bestow lasting happiness upon this nation, and to make *it* the means of imparting extensive and durable blessings to the world. We could scarcely forbear perhaps to think, that it was *for our own righteousness*, we were thus become, as it were, the chosen people of God;—that our prosperity was the reward of our past, and the harbinger of our future virtue. We thought perhaps,—that God gave us so many countries, in which brutal ferocity and savage cruelty had before reigned almost without controul,—because,—under *our* dominion,—arts and sciences,—religion and liberty, would there fix in future, their habitations; because, the lands would be cultivated, and the natives civilized;—because, we should conquer only to humanize,—and where-ever we found a savage, we should leave a christian.—We thought perhaps, that our enemies on the contrary, were not suffered to prevail,—because, *THEY* would have triumphed only to plunder, and subdued only to tyrannise; because, they would have wielded the scourge of superstition, and rivetted the chains of slavery.

But far,—very far, were we from exploring the real designs of God.—Far,—very far,—were we from foreseeing,—that when we had effectually secured our brethren in America from the inroads of the ruthless savage, and the attempts of the ambitious christian,—that the

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bloody flags of civil war would soon be unfurled on their coasts, and that the swords of brothers and of friends would ere long be pointed at each other's breasts. By no means did we imagine, that the very country which poured in the fullest tide of our prosperity, would be the most fruitful source of our misfortunes,—and that when God had seemed to set us upon a rock which should never be moved,—he meant only,—*that the lofty looks of man should be humbled, and that the haughtiness of men should be bowed down*;—that he designed only to render those possessions our severest scourge, which had been our highest boast;—that country the scene of our disgrace, which had been the theatre of our glory;—and the rapidity and extent of our successes, only the speediest, and surest means of utter ruin and destruction.

Whosoever thou art, whether nation or individual, that once vauntedst thyself of thy prosperity, read the history of Providence and tremble. Look up with awe to the chastisements of his hand, and *call thine own ways to remembrance!* For of this be assured,—that though PROSPERITY is frequently not the REWARD, but only the TRIAL of VIRTUE, that ADVERSITY however, is always intended to be the CORRECTOR or SCOURGE of VICE. When it approaches us with its mildest countenance, it comes only as a *monitor* to warn us of our danger; but if it be then unheeded, it soon assumes its severest form, and rushes upon us, as the *avenger* of our crimes.

As then, we are now met in the most solemn manner to humble ourselves under the corrective hand of God, and to deprecate his anger by fasting and prayer;—let it be our hearty endeavour, to make it *such* a fast, “*as God has chosen.*”—Let not the different parties in the state, any longer continue, each to boast itself of its own righteousness,—with pharisaical pride to be thankful, that *it* is not as the *other is*,—and each fully satisfied with itself, accuse the other of being the SOLE cause of all our calamities. If they believe,—that there is a righteous Providence who governs nations and individuals, they will suspect, that the root of the evil lies much deeper, and spreads much wider. If either they examine more closely, they will discern, or if they become more candid, they will acknowledge, that they neither of them feel that fervor of PUBLIC SPIRIT, which their outward professions declare,—nor that glow of PRIVATE BENEVOLENCE which the splendor of numerous charities seems to indicate. Instead of examining, and censuring *only those*, whom, *each* supposes to be immediately the weak or guilty authors of our distress,—let each of us narrowly inspect, and amend our own conduct. For however weak or wicked others may really be,—yet we may be assured,—that neither *their* weakness nor wickedness could have hurt *us*, if our own crimes had not first deserved punishment. Let us with caution condemn others, but with rigour judge ourselves. Let each man look into his own heart, and each will see there sufficient frailties and vices to justify God’s haviest chastisements.

ments, and to convince him, that Providence in the midst of judgment, "*has remembered mercy.*" For where is the individual in private life, who can say,—I HAVE NO SIN. Or where is that party or denomination of men in public business, which can truly boast of that PERFECT CONSISTENCY OF CONDUCT, which has in NO INSTANCE *whatever* tended to bring on this present awful crisis, seemingly big, with the most dreadful catastrophe.

Let us upon this,—and upon all other occasions,—where Providence makes HUMAN AGENTS the instruments of our punishment, be more solicitous in tracing GOD'S INTENTION in the CHASTISEMENT, than MAN'S SHARE in the INFLECTION.—Would we but adopt this principle of conduct,—an habitual piety towards God would soon propitiate his anger, and secure to us his favour. Those malignant passions towards men, from whence only "*come wars and fightings amongst us,*" would die away; and christian love and charity, would shed abroad upon our hearts, THAT PEACE, which, was the last, best gift of Jesus Christ on earth, to every true disciple.—THAT PEACE,—which, "*the world cannot give;*"—but without which, PROSPERITY, is, but a CURSE, and with which, ADVERSITY, is even a BLESSING.

F I N I S.

Lately were published,
BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS DISCOURSE,
Two SERMONS preached before the *University of Cambridge.*

- I. The Power of Christianity over the malignant Passions asserted; the real Causes of Persecutions amongst Christians are pointed out, and the true Grounds of mutual Forbearance in religious Opinions explained. Preached Nov. 3d, 1776.
- II. The Necessity and Truth of the Three Principal Revelations demonstrated from the Gradations of Science, and the Progress of the mental Faculties. Preached on Commencement Sunday, June 29, 1777.

And also formerly were published,
THE FOLLOWING WORKS,
Most of which, (if not all) have been for some Time
OUT OF PRINT.

- I. Definitions and Axioms relative to Charity, Charitable Institutions, and the Poor's Laws. In which, Houses of Industry were first recommended to the Attention of the Public.
- II. A Letter to the Bishop of Gloucester, in which his Lordship's *Divine Legation* is defended, both from the Misapprehensions of his Lordship's Friends, and Misrepresentations of his Enemies.
- III. Explanations of difficult Texts of Scripture, in four Dissertations; 1st. On eternal Punishments. 2nd. On Christ's cursing the Fig-Tree. 3d. On Mistranslations. 4th. On Christ's Temptation; in which the Notions of a Vision and the personal Appearance of Satan are refuted.
- IV. A full Refutation of the Reasons advanced in Defence of the Petition for the Abolition of Subscription to the Articles and Liturgy. By no Bigot to, nor against the Church of England.
- V. A Letter to the Clergy of Norfolk, upon the Abolition of Tythes. In which the Schemes proposed for an Equivalent, are examined.

